

Billy Sunday collection

S1344

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Rare Books and Manuscripts
140 North Senate Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana, 46204
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Summary Information

Repository	Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Sunday, Billy, 1862-1935
Title	Billy Sunday collection
Date	1904/10/24
Extent	0.01 Cubic feet 1 folder
Language	English
Text [Folder]	S1344

Preferred Citation

Billy Sunday collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library

Biographical Note

William “Billy” Sunday, professional baseball player turned famous evangelist, was born on November 19, 1862 near Ames, Iowa to William and Mary Jane Sunday. Born into a poor family, Sunday spent a portion of his childhood at the Iowa Soldiers’ Orphan’s Home and, while there, received some schooling (equivalent to a grammar school education). In 1874, Sunday left the orphanage and began working a series of odd jobs.

In 1880, Sunday moved to Marshalltown, Iowa where he played on the town’s baseball team. While playing for Marshalltown, A. C. Anson, manager of the Chicago White Stockings, took notice of Sunday’s athleticism and skill in the field. Sunday signed with the Chicago White Stockings in 1883 and his professional baseball career continued until 1891. During these years, Sunday also played for the Pittsburgh Alleghenys and the Philadelphia Phillies.

In 1886, Billy Sunday publicly converted to Christianity in Chicago and renounced drinking, gambling, swearing, and theatergoing and stopped playing baseball on Sundays. During this time, Sunday also met and married Helen “Nell” Thompson on September 5, 1888; the couple would have four children: Helen, George, William, and Paul. In 1891, Sunday left his career as a professional baseball player and took a job at the YMCA. Sunday began working for J. Wilbur Chapman, a prominent evangelist, as his advance man and would travel to communities preparing them for revivals. In 1896, after working under Chapman for some time, Sunday became a revivalist in his own right and conducted over sixty revivals throughout the Midwest over the next five years.

Sunday was known for his flamboyant and sensational speaking style. While delivering his sermons, Sunday often paced across the stage, stamped his feet, pounded his fists on the podium, and performed handstands and other gymnastic feats. Sunday was a Presbyterian minister (ordained in 1903) and spoke out against science and the theory of evolution and condemned drinking. During World War I, Sunday’s speeches featured patriotic and nationalist themes. He urged young men to enlist or register for the draft and recruiters from the Army and the Navy set up booths at his revival campaigns.

Billy Sunday’s popularity declined following the war. Though much of his rhetoric remained the same, his audiences changed eschewing sensational revival talks in favor of other forms of entertainment including films, radio shows, and automobiles. Sunday continued preaching to small audiences nearly up until his death in 1935.

Billy Sunday died on November 6, 1935 at the age of 72 in Chicago, Illinois. He was buried in Forest Home Cemetery in Forest Park, Illinois.

Sources:

Dorsett, Lyle W. *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991.

Spragins, C. Fitzhugh. "Billy Sunday." *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia* (January 2017): Research Starters, EBSCOhost. Accessed August 15, 2017.

Scope and Contents

This collection includes personal correspondence from William "Billy" Sunday written on 1904/10/24 to Henry Yates Satterlee, the first Episcopal Bishop of Washington, regarding their upcoming visit.

Arrangement

This collection consists of a single item.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Rare Books and Manuscripts

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Legal title, copyright, and literary rights reside with Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN. All requests to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted to Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Custodial History

This collection was received by Rare Books and Manuscripts as a donation.

Accruals

No further additions are expected.

Processing Information

Collection processing completed and EAD finding aid created 2017/08/15 by Kristin Lee.

Controlled Access Headings

Subject(s)

- Baseball players--United States--1880-1910
- Evangelists--United States
- Revivals--United States